

Telephone: 651-266-6565

Facsimile: 651-228-3261



## CITY OF SAINT PAUL Christopher B. Coleman, Mayor

25 West Fourth Street Saint Paul, MN 55102

DATE: February 23, 2011

TO: Neighborhood Planning Committee

**FROM:** Amy Spong, Historic Preservation Specialist

**SUBJECT:** Proposed designation of the *Jacob Schmidt Brewing Company* 

Historic District as a Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Site

## SITE DESCRIPTION

The Jacob Schmidt Brewing Company Historic District straddles West 7th Street 1.5 miles southwest of downtown St. Paul and is within the West 7<sup>th</sup>/Ft. Road District 9 neighborhood. The District is roughly bounded by Jefferson Avenue on the north, Oneida and Erie Streets on the east, James Avenue on the south, and Toronto Street on the west, excluding a small triangle enclosed by West 7th Street, Palace Avenue, and Toronto Street. Fort Road, as West 7th Street was known though its first century, was the major artery connecting downtown St. Paul, the Upper Landing settlement, and Fort Snelling.

The historic district encompasses 54 acres of land in an area of mixed residential, commercial, and light industrial use (see Attachment 2 for map). Extant buildings and structures historically involved in beer production and packaging are confined to the south side of West Seventh Street (Numbers 1-4). Most important of these are four freestanding complexes: the Main Brewery Complex (property number 1, spanning from the boiler house on the north to the malt terminal on the south), the Bottling Plant (property number 2), the Office Building (property number 3), and the Keg House (property number 4). Three additional properties south of West Seventh Street are: a concrete retaining wall and iron fence connected to the bottling complex (property number 5), a detached well house (property number 6), and an advertising billboard (property number 7). These are enumerated in order of construction of their first building component. After the period of historic significance, a handful of modern additions were made to the Main Brewery Complex, the Bottling Plant, and the Keg House. Two additional well houses were also built. Finally, the ethanol operation of the early 2000s added a scattering of structures to the sound end of the plat and one building addition to the Keg House.

Beneath and stretching both north and south of West 7th Street are the Underground Cellars (property number 8), comprised of the interconnecting fermentation and storage cellars and passageways of the Main Brewery Complex and its predecessor on West 7th Street.

North of West Seventh Street are an additional seven historic properties: a sprawling Delivery Vehicle Complex (property number 11) and six residential properties originally owned by the brewery or its officials (property numbers 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, and 15). These also are enumerated in order of construction of their first building component. Modern, noncontributing properties and property components north of West Seventh Street include private automotive garages, a utility building, and a gazebo.

The district contains 15 contributing properties and 11 noncontributing properties. It has a high degree of integrity, retaining all of its key buildings from the Schmidt-Bremer era of 1901-1955 and fragments of buildings from the Stahlmann era preceding Schmidt. Nearly all of the alterations and demolitions occurring within the period of significance were done in the course of improving or expanding the brewery and its thematically related buildings. Those occurring in recent times have not harmed the fundamental integrity of any of the historic structures. In addition, brewery architects within the period of significance showed an unusual degree of respect for the work of their predecessors, creating a complex of buildings and structures with a remarkable degree of homogeneity considering the numerous phases of construction.

## PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE (1858-1955)

The period of significance for the Jacob Schmidt Brewing Company is from 1858 to 1955 and spans the ownership of the Stahlmann, Schmidt, and Bremer families, when the brewery's historic buildings were erected. The start date marks the beginning of Stahlmann's expansion into native-stone buildings and underground fermentation cellars, and the terminal date comes at the end of large scale, locally owned and managed brewing operations in the area until the birth of microbreweries in the 1980s.

All of the residential properties within the historic district belong to the period of significance and are contributing properties to the district. However, many of the other properties within the district boundaries are non-contributing, in each case because of construction after the period of significance and in a manner incompatible with the architecture of the historic period.

## **CONFORMANCE TO LEGISLATIVE CODE**

The St. Paul Legislative Code establishes seven criteria for the designation of heritage preservation sites (§73.05). The Jacob Schmidt Brewing Company Historic District meets criteria 1, 5, and 7.

Designation Criterion 1 (§73.05(a)(1)) states that the Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) shall consider the following about the district:

Its character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City of St. Paul, the State of Minnesota, or the United States

The brewery industry played a leading role in several facets of St. Paul's development as an urban center: the growth of neighborhoods remote from the city core, the attraction and employment of a large population of German immigrants, and the emergence of the city as a major producer of goods consumed by the expanding tier of northern states to the west. Numerous spurs from the brewery to a nearby line of the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis, and Omaha Railroad aided the growth of its western market.

As a mark of the brewery's economic importance to St. Paul, it led the way in the city's emergence from each of the major economic depressions between 1858 and 1935. Stahlmann's building campaigns of 1858 and 1880 were among the first entrepreneurial initiatives after the panics of 1857 and 1875, respectively. An even more severe depression swept the country with the Panic of 1893. Building activity and commercial enterprise entered a trough from which they were not to emerge until 1901. In that year, \$600,000 was expended in manufacturing plants, with all but \$100,000 of this sum going to brewery expansions and rebuilding at Schmidt's brewery and Hamm's brewery on the East Side. Finally, in the Great Depression of the 1930s, Schmidt Brewery's return to production at the end of Prohibition again was at the forefront of renewed growth and investment in St. Paul's commercial and industrial sector.

Designation Criterion 5 (§73.05(a)(5)) states that the HPC shall consider the following about the district:

# Its identification as the work of an architect, engineer, or master builder whose individual work has influenced the development of the City of St. Paul

The main brewery complex represents the masterwork of one of the nation's leading brewery architects, Bernard Barthel, which was carried forward by his local follower, Walter W. Magee, and leading St. Paul architect Charles A. Hausler.

Bernard Barthel designed and engineered the Jacob Schmidt Brewery at the beginning of an illustrious career. It was his first independent commission, and it remained the signature accomplishment of his career.

Barthel's signature as designer of Midwest breweries was a stylistically unified building mass recalling the Romanesque castles of the Rhineland. His breweries were also renowned for incorporating the latest technologies in ventilation and refrigeration, all developed from the innovations of his renowned mentor and former employer, Frederick W. Wolff.

Walter W. Magee, hired to remodel and expand the brewery the year of Barthel's death, followed Barthel's lead as both designer and engineer before launching into a Moderne aesthetic to which he applied a distinctive industrial edge.

Designation Criterion 7 (§73.05(a)(7)) states that the HPC shall consider the following about the district:

# Its unique location or singular physical characteristic representing an established familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community, or City of St. Paul

Foreign tourists of the Upper Mississippi River Valley during the latter half of the 19th century often remarked on the resemblance of the massive stone outcroppings on its bluffs to Rhineland castles. Bernard Barthel took these musings one step further by constructing monumental brew houses in frank imitation of the complex contours and fortified towers of Rhenish medieval castles. His remaining brew houses in St. Paul, Burlington, Iowa, and Warsaw, Illinois all tower over the river. In addition, the location of the Schmidt brewery at the heart of the West 7th Street neighborhood gives it a powerful community presence. More generally, it is the single most prominent visual landmark in St. Paul west of the State Capitol and the Cathedral.

#### **BACKGROUND**

The first comprehensive Historic Sites Survey in St. Paul was completed in 1983. Several of the brewery buildings were identified and inventory forms were completed. A thematic National Register Nomination for brewery related buildings was also prepared and the buildings were listed as eligible for designation in the final report. In 2004, Andrew Hine, submitted documentation to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and per a letter dated February 3, 2005 from the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS) the Jacob Schmidt Brewing Company site was determined eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places under National Register Criteria A, B and C. The letter states the brewery is significant under Criterion A for its

association with industry and commerce for its production of a major brand of beer. The brewery is also significant for its association with Christopher Stahlmann, Jacob Schmidt and Otto and Adolph Bremer who were responsible for the establishment and success of the brewery. It is also architecturally significant under Criterion C for its [Victorian] Romanesque style of architecture designed by Chicago architect and engineer, Bernard Barthel.

In 2005, the West 7<sup>th</sup>/Ft. Road Federation commissioned Paul Clifford Larson to complete a Designation Study which further established the architectural significance of the brewery site, recommended boundaries for the district and also examined the development of the brewing industry in Minnesota and the larger context of brewery development.

In a letter dated April 13, 2010, Council Member Dave Thune, formally requested the St. Paul HPC initiate a process to locally designate the now-abandoned Schmidt Brewery. On May 13, 2010, the HPC voted unanimously to initiate the designation process for the potential historic district. HPC staff applied for and received a \$7,000 Historical and Cultural Heritage Grant from the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund administered by the Minnesota Historical Society. The City retained Paul Clifford Larson to complete the local designation form and assist in the preparation of the Preservation Program for the district. Final drafts were submitted to the HPC on February 11, 2011.

As required by the Legislative Code 73.05 (b):

The heritage preservation commission shall advise the city planning commission of the proposed designation of a heritage preservation site, including boundaries, and a program for the preservation of a heritage preservation site, and secure from the city planning commission its recommendation with respect to the relationship of the proposed heritage preservation designation to the comprehensive plan of the City of Saint Paul, its opinion as to the effect of the proposed designation upon the surrounding neighborhood, and its opinion and recommendation as to any other planning consideration which may be relevant to the proposed designation, together with its recommendation of approval, rejection or modification of the proposed designation. Said recommendation shall become part of the official record concerning the proposed designation and shall be submitted by the heritage preservation commission along with its recommendation concerning the proposed designation to the city council. The heritage preservation commission may make such modifications, changes and alterations concerning the proposed designations as it deems necessary in consideration of the recommendations of the city planning commission.

#### **COMPREHENSIVE PLAN CONFORMANCE**

There are several references to the development of the Schmidt Brewery area within the Comprehensive Plan. Specifically, the area is identified as an opportunity site within the Land Use Chapter and is located along a future transitway (T2.9(a)) in the Transportation Chapter. The following is a list of applicable references in the Comprehensive Plan:

**Historic Preservation Chapter** 

Strategy 3: Identify, Evaluate and Designate Historic Resources

- **3.11.** Make the designation of significant historic resources as heritage preservation sites a priority for the City Council.
- **3.12.** Designate historic resources, such as buildings, structures, objects, archaeological sites, historic districts, and landscapes as Saint Paul heritage preservation sites or historic districts.

Strategy 4: Preserve and Protect Historic Resources

**4.3.** Protect undesignated historic resources.

**Strategy 5:** Use Historic Preservation to Further Economic Development and Sustainability

- **5.3.** Realize the full economic potential of key historic resources.
- **5.9.** Actively promote the use of Federal historic preservation tax credits for the rehabilitation of income-producing properties listed on or determined eligible for listing on the NRHP (see Appendix HP-A).

# **Land Use Chapter**

Strategy 1: Target Growth in Unique Neighborhoods

- **1.11** Designate areas as Neighborhood Centers (The brewery area is listed as a future center).
- **1.17** Promote a place, amenity, or activity that serves as a community focus and emphasizes the special identity of individual Neighborhood Centers.
- **1.54** Identify opportunity sites for future development consistent with the *Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan*, either as mixed-use development or as employment centers, including, but not limited to (The brewery area is listed as an opportunity site).

Strategy 3: Promote Aesthetics and Development Standards

**3.18** Support the protection and enhancement of the visibility of architectural landmarks.

# **Transportation Chapter**

Strategy 2: Provide Balance and Choice

**2.13(e)** As a part of redevelopment or reinvestment, discourage the demolition of housing units or historic resources for new surface parking lots.

# **RELATIONSHIP TO NEIGHBORHOOD PLANS**

There are several references to the Schmidt Brewery and historic preservation within the West 7<sup>th</sup>/Fort Road District 9 Area Plan (adopted by the district council in *2006*). The plan summary, adopted by the City on July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2010, highlights a strategy to pursue local and National Register designation of the Schmidt Brewery buildings. The designation of the Schmidt Brewing Company Historic District as a local heritage preservation site would serve to meet the goals of this plan. Further, certifying the district for the National Register of Historic Places would allow for income producing uses to take advantage of the Federal and newly adopted State Historic Tax Credits for rehabilitation.

## **EFFECT ON SURROUNDING NEIGHBORHOOD**

Designation would have a positive effect on the surrounding properties, both residential and commercial, and act as an anchor for redevelopment in the Ft. Road neighborhood.

Having design review guidelines will help to insure the district develops while maintaining its architectural and historical character over the long term.

## STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Neighborhood Planning Committee recommend that the Planning Commission support the designation of the Jacob Schmidt Brewing Company Historic District as a Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Site and the accompanying Preservation Program. A copy of the draft resolution will be handed out at the committee meeting.

#### Attachments:

- 1. Designation Activities Checklist
- 2. Part 1. Jacob Schmidt Brewing Company Historic District Nomination (includes district map showing contributing and non-contributing structures)
  Part 2. Jacob Schmidt Brewing Company Historic District Nomination (only Part 1 and 2 included, Part 3 includes individual property descriptions and is a large file)
- 3. Part 4. Preservation Program for the Historic District